

Statement of the Honorable Tim Bishop
10th Anniversary of the Crash of TWA Flight 800
July 17, 2006

Mr. Speaker today is the 10th Anniversary of the tragic crash of TWA Flight 800, which took the lives of 230 men and women off the coast of Long Island near my Congressional district.

It is important that we keep alive the memory of those who perished over the Atlantic just moments after departing for home, school trips, and to visit loved ones. And we must do all that we can to safeguard the flying public against future disasters.

Just as importantly, the brave families of those who lost their loved ones during the Flight 800 disaster deserve our recognition. As do the emergency personnel, volunteers and neighbors who selflessly worked for days on end in the recovery efforts.

Like other challenging times our nation has faced, the reaction to the Flight 800 catastrophe brought out the best in not only my constituents; but so many others in the surrounding towns, states, and across the nation, who joined in mourning the loss of so many lives and helped a community recover from its most horrific tragedy.

Throughout -- and despite -- their grief, the families of the victims worked tirelessly to build a permanent memorial with the help of Navy Sea-Bees and thousands of dedicated, local building trades union members.

Today, this solemn monument serves as a constant reminder of our tremendous loss one decade ago.

In particular, I would like to thank the gracious, and dedicated, men and women who work to maintain the memorial at Smith Point County Park in the Town of Brookhaven, New York.

The memory of the passengers of Flight 800 lives on because of the continued works of people who will always remember what happened.

I have visited the Flight 800 site many times, and the recent completion of the monument offers some measure of closure to everyone who was affected by the tragedy.

In the ten years since Flight 800, hundreds of thousands have visited the park in acknowledgement of a shared sorrow for those who died. The monument ensures that future generations can do the same.

As we recognize the tenth anniversary of the Flight 800 disaster, it's important to take stock of our progress in preventing air disasters over the last decade.

We've made some great strides in aviation safety, particularly, for example, with design upgrades for planes and an ongoing effort to mitigate fuel tank flammability, the cause of the Flight 800 crash.

America has not experienced a major air disaster in five years, and more people travel by air today than at any other time in our nation's history.

But what haven't we done? Regrettably, we have not addressed the underlying cause of the Flight 800 explosion.

The FAA has delayed taking on this challenge for years, and we still do not have a final FAA directive that will protect every air traveler.

The cause of the Flight 800 catastrophe was determined years ago, and we know how to prevent similar disasters.

We have the technology to protect against another tragedy like the one we witnessed ten years ago, but to date, we don't have the mandate for change.

Last year, I introduced H.R. 4174, the Transport Aircraft Fuel Tank Safety Act, which requires the FAA to retrofit all planes with new technology and to increase safety.

In addition, I petitioned the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to hold hearings on the safety of fuel tanks on airplanes and to get to the bottom of why we don't upgrade all planes with the necessary technology.

I'm hopeful that my colleagues will work with me to explain the delay.

With the completion of the Flight 800 monument, we have taken a significant step towards maintaining the memory of Flight 800, but we should also ensure that we don't have another Flight 800.

I would like to offer again my deepest condolences to the surviving families and friends of the victims of the Flight 800 crash and to thank everyone who has worked hard to memorialize those who died 10-years ago today.

Thank you Mr. Speaker, and I yield back the balance of my time.